

Basic Flag Football Rules

Object

Flag football is played with two teams of 5-8 players who attempt to score points by moving the ball down the field across the goal line. The team with the most points at the end of regulation time is the winner.

Playing Area

The playing field is a rectangle usually around 60-80 yards long and 20-30 yards wide. There is a goal line at each end of the field leading into a 10-yard end zone.

Equipment

To play the game, you need a football and a flag or flag belt for each player.

Starting Play

A coin is tossed prior to the opening kick-off to determine which team will kick-off first and which goals teams will defend. Teams change ends at half-time. Play begins with a kick-off at the start of each half and after a score.

Playing the Ball

Players can kick, carry, and the throw the ball to move it up the field.

A defender may knock down a pass that's in the air.

If the player with the ball has his flag pulled or if he goes out of bounds, he is called "down" and the ball is dead.

A down is the period of time that begins when the center puts the ball into play until the ball becomes dead.

When a team has the ball, it has 4 downs to advance the ball 10 yards or score. Each time it moves the ball 10 yards down the field, it's awarded a new set of 4 downs. If it fails to advance 10 yards, the ball is given to the other team at the point it became dead at the end of the 4th down.

The line of scrimmage for each team is an imaginary line passing through the end of the football nearest to them, extending from sideline to sideline.

The area between these lines, which is the length of the football, is the "neutral zone."

The offensive team must have at least 4 players on the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.

The snap is a backward pass through the legs of the center, which puts the ball into play.

The snap must be one quick and continuous motion, and the snapper can't move his feet or lift a hand until after the ball is snapped.

Other players have to stay still until the ball is snapped.

No one is allowed to enter the neutral zone or move toward his opponent's goal line at a snap.

The snap must be to a player behind the line of scrimmage, unless it touches the ground.

Flag Belt

Shirts must be tucked in, and they are not allowed to hang down over the flag belt.

If a player loses their flag belt legally or illegally during a down and gains possession of a live ball, that player is considered down if they are touched with one hand by a defender between the shoulders and the knees.

Players must have the ball before their flag can legally be pulled. It's illegal for a defender to intentionally pull a flag from an offensive player who doesn't have the ball. The infraction is considered a personal foul with a 10-yard penalty.

Guarding the flag belt is not allowed. Runners can't use any part of their body or the ball to keep an opponent from pulling their flag.

Punting

On 4th down, the offensive team is asked if they want to punt from a protected scrimmage. If they do, the defense isn't allowed to penetrate the line of scrimmage on the snap. They can try to block the punt only by jumping straight up in the air on their side of the ball.

All members of the punting team, except the punter, must be on the line of scrimmage, and none of them can move until the ball is kicked.

If a punt crosses the scrimmage line and touches a player from either team and then hits the ground, the ball is dead and possession goes to the receiving team.

Backward Passes and Fumbles

A runner can make a backward pass at any time. A teammate may catch the pass or recover it if it hits the ground.

Forward Passes and Interceptions

The offensive team is allowed one forward pass during each play from the line of scrimmage, but the passer must be behind the line of scrimmage when releasing the ball. Any other forward pass is illegal.

If a player is in the air while attempting to catch a ball, he must land with at least 1 foot in bounds when he has possession of the ball before going out of bounds, unless contact by the opposing team is what causes him to go out of bounds.

If players from opposing teams catch the ball at the same time, the ball is given to the team that snapped the ball.

Scoring

Points can be scored in the following manner:

Touchdown = 6 points

Extra point = 1 point (if successful from the 3-yard line)

Extra point = 2 points (if successful from the 10-yard line)

Safety = 2 points

A safety is called when an offensive player is down with the ball in his own end zone. The team that was scored on has to kick off from their 14-yard line.

For official NIRSA rulings go to:

<http://www.sotx.org/get-involved/coaches/resources-and-rules/nirsa-rules.pdf>